

Mortar Team Sets a High Score in Fallujah

By Spc. Al Barrus
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- U.S. Forces took control of the former insurgent stronghold of Fallujah after less than a week of fighting during Operation Phantom Fury. Part of 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment's victory came with the help of a ready and reliable mortar platoon.

Standing by 24 hours a day during seven days of battle, the 2-7 Cav. Headquarters Company mortarmen received dozens of missions daily. Even from six kilometers away the mortarmen played a vital role in the operation and helped pacify the hostile city.

"Being a mortar man, it's good knowing that we fire these rounds and take out a lot of the [insurgents]," Spc. Daniel Ethridge, a mortarman in Headquarters Company said. "It's not too much effort on our part, and we can take out 40 guys with one round."

The platoon broke a personal record in one week of missions by firing an enormous number of 120 mm high-explosive rounds.

"We are pushing over 600 rounds in this week," said Capt. Nick Gratkowski, the mortar platoon leader. "That's a record for us. The most rounds we will fire back at Fort Hood is about 250 in one year, so we have shot off a couple of years worth here."

Receiving so many fire missions, and firing so many rounds places a significant workload on these troops, especially when missions come during the dead of night.

"We stand by all day listening to the radio for fire missions," Ethridge said. "At night we take turns listening to the radio and just sleep real



By Spc. Al Barrus, 122nd MPAD

Spc. William Armstrong, a mortarman in Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, drops a 120 mm round down his mortar. He and the rest of his platoon fired more than 600 rounds at positions in Fallujah from their base outside the city.

light. We're on call 24 seven. After seven days of doing these shifts, we are starting to get real tired."

While sleep remains limited, the living conditions at the 2-7 Cav. base, Alpha Otter, are no cup of tea either, the mortarman said.

"We've been sitting and sleeping out here on our M113 track vehicles for seven days straight and it gets pretty dull," Spc. William Armstrong, a mortarman, said. "To stay clean we have no showers. Out here that's what baby wipes and bottled water are for. As for food, mornings and lunch we eat [Meals Ready to Eat], but at nights they bring in hot chow and that really helps. It's something to look forward to."

The mortar team has

spent the majority of their deployment at Taji, Iraq, north of Baghdad. There they have pretty nice living conditions. Even compared to their time in Najaf, their setup outside of Fallujah is the grittiest, they said.

"At Najaf we had an actual place to fire from which was pretty secure" Ethridge said. "We were next to an [Iraqi Police] station, and we could go inside and relax, here we are just in the middle of a desert."

Even with their current conditions, the platoon leader said his men get the job done without argument.

"We have nothing fancy here," Gratkowski said. "Hey, we get hot chow at night. My guys aren't complaining. They are the craziest guys in the



Spc. Daniel Ethridge, a mortarman in HHC, 2-7 Cav., cleans his section's mortar between fire missions.

battalion, but also the hardest working. Whatever mission I give them, they will do it to their best. My men are why I love my job."



By Staff Sgt. Christopher Grant, 411th Engineer Battalion

Bohica Blues cartoons are drawn by Staff Sgt. Christopher Grant, of the 411th Engineer Battalion from Boise, Idaho. His battalion is attached to the 1st Cavalry Division in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Grant says he draws cartoons as a way to present his and his Soldiers' opinions to the world. His work is also displayed at the the Antelope (Engineer) dining facility on Camp Al-Tahreer.

Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

Where do you live?
ayn taskun?

Saturday

High: 73
Low: 56



Sunday

High: 75
Low: 57



Monday

High: 76
Low: 57



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

Commanding General: Maj. Gen. Peter Chiarelli

Public Affairs Officer: Lt. Col. James Hutton

122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Cmdr.: Maj. John Fuhrman

Public Affairs Supervisor: Master Sgt. Dave Larsen

1st Sgt. 122nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment: 1st Sgt. William Kuhns

Editor: Spc. Marie Whitney

Staff Writers: Sgt. 1st Class Tony Sailer, Staff Sgt. Susan German, Staff Sgt. Merrion LaSonde, Sgt. Dan Purcell, Sgt. Christina Rockhill, Cpl.

Benjamin Cossel, Cpl. Bill Putnam, Spc. Jan Critchfield, Spc. Andy Miller, Spc. Erik LeDrew, Spc. Al Barrus, Pfc. Brian Schroeder, Pfc. Matthew McLaughlin.

The Daily Charge is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of **The Daily Charge** are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of **The Daily Charge** is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

News Notes

Not Guilty By Means of Insanity

FREEHOLD, N.J. (AP) -- Nira Nevins said only one of her many personalities robbed a bank, but they're all going to jail. Nevins, 55, woman maintains that an alternate, childlike personality, named "Jimmy," came over her the day she robbed the bank. "I am so ashamed of our actions," she told Superior Court Judge Edward M. Neafsey on Tuesday. The judge ordered Nevins to serve 18 years in prison for kidnapping the bank's head teller and forcing her to drive from the scene. He also imposed a concurrent 13-year prison term for the armed robbery of the bank in 2002. Jurors said afterward they believed Jimmy's emergence was faked.

He Should Have Just Hired a Maid

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (AP) -- A mayoral candidate known for walking around town with a parrot on his shoulder has been charged with burglary, accused of stealing an acquaintance's Dirt Devil vacuum. The bird apparently gave him away. Michael Sullivan spent Friday and Saturday night at a vacant home owned by Christopher McGill. But on Sunday, McGill left a note warning Sullivan that if he stayed a third night, it would be trespassing. On Monday, McGill discovered his vacuum missing - and found a green feather belonging to Sullivan's parrot, named Arturo Tortilla.



Killeen Daily Herald

President George W. Bush, first lady Laura Bush and first dog Barney are greeted Thursday at Fort Hood by Major General James Thurman and his wife Beth.

President Touches Down at Fort Hood

KILLEEN, Texas (Killeen Daily Herald) - Air Force One carrying President Bush touched down at Robert Gray Army Airfield at about 3:25 p.m. Thursday.

A waiting helicopter whisked the president away to his ranch at Crawford where he remained overnight. He flies today to Santiago, Chile, where he is scheduled to hold one-on-one meetings on Saturday with the leaders of Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Russia, a senior administration official told The Associated Press.

Bush also plans to meet with Mexican President Vicente Fox on Sunday, the official was quoted as saying.

The trip is part of an economic summit that includes leaders of Japan and China. While the president has flown into the airport before when it was just used by the military, this was his first visit since the joint use airport opened to commercial traffic this summer - meaning that it would affect passengers this time.

Thursday's Killeen arrival brought a short delay to air traffic in the wake of more than two days of extensive delays caused by bad weather.

Starting Gate Opens for Dramatic Expansion

CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN, Wash. (Seattle Times) -- The battle for the soul of the Puget Sound skier has been joined. Or averted, depending on your perspective.

For seven years, the "new" owners of Crystal Mountain, arguably Washington's top ski mountain, have watched helplessly as glitzier, wealthier competitors have stolen away what used to be a dedicated crop of local snow riders.

Crystal, purchased seven years ago by Boyne USA, already had 3,100 vertical feet of outstanding terrain that, while not comparable to major competitors in sheer size, has always drawn praise as some of the West's Best. And from day one, Boyne has vowed to upgrade the area's dated base village and lift system to match it.

Immediately after receiving the keys to the place, they announced an aggressive, costly expansion plan that would increase the area's skier capacity by 50 percent and add seven



Seattle Times

The \$19 million of improvements at Crystal Mountain over the past seven years are just the beginning for one of the state's top ski areas.

to 10 new lifts - one of which would be a massive tram from the base to a sprawling new restaurant at the 7,012-foot summit.

Some Crystal skiers rejoiced; others complained that their own private play-

ground - particularly its vaunted, remote North and South Backcountry areas - were about to be spoiled by the masses. Enviro's, for their part, squawked, warning of a Whistler South that would ruin the character of the largely wild area on the northeast corner of Mount Rainier National Park.

Last month, after years of appeals, exhaustive reviews, setbacks, challenges and negotiations with the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the land under Crystal, the area's development plan met with approval. A handful of minor challenges to the plan have been filed, but none likely will prove significant enough to derail the project, the government says.

Skiers and snowboarders who take the time to sift through the piles of development studies will discover that, 10 to 12 years from now, the new, improved Crystal Mountain is going to look a lot like Crystal Mountain.

Holtz to Retire After Season

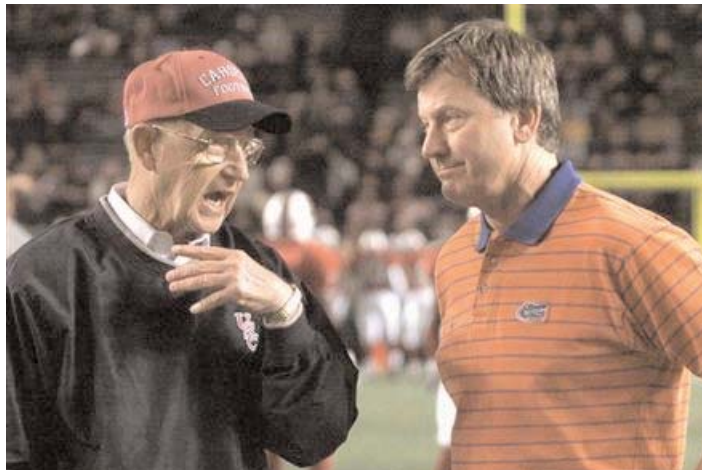
COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) -- Lou Holtz will retire as coach at South Carolina after the season, The Associated Press learned Thursday night, apparently paving the way for Steve Spurrier to replace him.

Holtz told his team before Thursday's practice that he was retiring, according to a source close to the program who spoke on condition of anonymity. All season Holtz said he was worn out and tired, and even said Spurrier would be a good choice to succeed him.

The Tennessean of Nashville reported Thursday that Spurrier had agreed to take over at South Carolina, if and when Holtz stepped down.

An announcement regarding Spurrier, who won a national championship at Florida, is expected next week, citing an anonymous source close to the situation.

South Carolina athletic director Mike McGee would not confirm or deny whether Holtz had decided to retire or Spurrier had been approached



University of South Carolina football coach Lou Holtz, left, and Florida coach Steve Spurrier chat prior to their game, Nov. 10, 2001, at Williams Brice Stadium in Columbia, S.C. Spurrier has agreed to take over as football coach at South Carolina if Lou Holtz retires at the end of the season.

to replace him.

Several calls to Spurrier's agent, Memphis-based Jimmy Sexton, were not returned.

After practice Thursday evening, Holtz drove his golf cart from the practice field to

the stadium to speak with a group of fans gathered to wish the team well before it leaves for Clemson on Friday. The coach thanked them for their support. "It's always meant a lot to me," he said.

Baseball Owners Delay Vote on Expos' Move

CHICAGO (AP) -- The Montreal Expos remain in limbo, already out of one home but not quite ready to move into a new one.

Instead of rubber-stamping the Expos' proposed move to Washington as expected Thursday, Major League Baseball owners made the surprise decision to table the vote. Commissioner Bud Selig said the move will still take place, with a vote by owners coming by Dec. 6.

"We will get this done," Selig said. "We just weren't quite ready with a lot of details. We like to have all the details done before we vote. Nothing more than that."

Baseball officials are so confident the team will be in Washington for its April 15 home opener, in fact, that alternatives weren't even discussed. Season tickets went on sale Thursday morning, and the team announced that manager Frank Robinson had agreed to a one-year contract extension through next season.

"We didn't consider any contingencies, we

didn't consider any other options," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer. "We fully expect to play in RFK next year, and we're planning on it."

The Expos' agreement with Washington calls for funding for a new stadium to be in place by Dec. 31. But the District of Columbia government has delayed approval of the financing, expressing concerns about costs of building the ballpark along the Anacostia River, about a dozen blocks south of the U.S. Capitol.

The agreement estimates the cost of refurbishing RFK Stadium, land acquisition and ballpark construction at \$435 million.

But some D.C. council members have claimed costs would be far higher, though, perhaps \$600 million or more. District of Columbia Council Chair Linda Cropp postponed a Nov. 9 vote on the deal, saying the District should spend two weeks seeking private financing.



In Brief

Star Stalked by Former SEAL

NEW YORK (Reuters) -- A former Navy deep-sea diver charged with stalking rock star Sheryl Crow had



developed "a dangerous obsession" for the singer, prosecutors told the trial jury on Thursday.

Ambrose Kappos, 38, is accused of breaking into New York's Hammerstein Ballroom where Crow was rehearsing for a benefit show last October, then slipping into her dressing room before he was tossed out, only to follow the singer to her limousine in an attempt to engage her in conversation. The Grammy-winning recording star is expected to testify in the trial next week.

Ozzy's Done with The Osbournes

ROME (Reuters) -- Aging rocker Ozzy Osbourne may have made his comeback by starring in one of MTV's most popular reality TV shows to date, but he's had enough. "When you watch a 25-minute episode, I've been filming all day," Ozzy said, when asked if he and his family were thinking of doing another series of *The Osbournes*. "At the end of it I didn't like having cameras around the house all the time," the man who helped invent heavy metal with his band Black Sabbath told reporters at the MTV Europe Music Awards in Rome. His wife and co-star agreed.

Comedy Group Visits Baghdad to Entertain Troops

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD -- Chicago-based comedy group The Second City visited 1st Brigade Combat Team Iron Horse Soldiers on Nov. 7 as a part of a USO tour of Iraq and Kuwait.

The show, composed of skits and improvised sketches, included singing and charades. While some of the gags were scripted, the group got the crowd to participate by asking for a setting, situation, or object for each sketch.

Laughter filled the Iron Horse theater, and the Soldiers said it was a nice break for them.

"That was the funniest thing I've seen in a long time," said Pfc. Robert Parsons, 20, a combat engineer in Company C, 20th Engineer Battalion. "They're really talented. They seemed motivated to be here."

After the show, the sextet moved to the Iron Horse Recreation Center to sign autographs.

"Anything to take [Soldiers' minds] off things is great," said Craig Uhler, one of the performers. "Laughter is our mission."



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

Rebecca Sage Allen (left) acts out a skit with other members of comedy group The Second City during a performance for Soldiers of the 1st BCT.

"I thought this was a great audience," said performer Andy St. Clair.

The group reached back into The Second City's 45-year history for skits that homesick Soldiers might enjoy. The inevitable result was a whole lot of laughter.

"[The Soldiers] always had good suggestions [and] had a lot of energy," said

performer Alex Fendrich.

"I'm proud to be able to perform anything for our troops," St. Clair said. "Anything I can do for [the troops] for all the things they're doing for us... although I'm really not doing much compared to what they're doing for America."

"They're heroes, we're knuckleheads," added Fendrich.

1st Brigade Begins Reconstruction of Bombed Bridge

By Spc. Jan Critchfield
122nd MPAD

BAGHDAD -- On Nov. 11, a white pickup truck carrying explosives was parked on the Diyala River Bridge, one of three major bridges in the Al-Thawra District. The truck exploded killing a cargo-truck driver and wounding a dozen others in addition severely damaging the bridge. The blast destroyed one lane of the bridge and blocked the other with the smoldering remains of the explosion. The bridge was unusable except by pedestrians desperate enough to straddle a narrow passage between the charred truck and a gaping hole in the deck of the bridge, with the murky waters of the Diyala below.

"Insurgents are targeting major infrastructure sites, like bridges," said Capt. Marc Distefano, Company A commander, 20th Engineer Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. "In April of last year, insur-



By Spc. Jan Critchfield, 122nd MPAD

A truck destroyed by an insurgent car bomb blocks a bridge spanning the Diyala River. \$200,000 in renovations had been planned for the bridge before the Nov. 11 bombing.

gents put shape charges on the Diyala River Bridge ... and destroyed parts of it."

Working rapidly, Company A had one lane of the Diyala River Bridge open for traffic within 48 hours. A few weeks later, a local contractor finished patching the other lane. That quick turnaround is something Company

A hopes to repeat, Distefano said.

"There are a lot of old people, handicapped people, children that are walking across this rubble to get to the other side to get to work, to go to church, to go to school, and it's severely inconvenienced them, and made a daily chore very dangerous," Distefano

said.

Company A already had \$200,000 in renovations planned for the bridge, including \$120,000 going into improving the bridge's deck subsequently damaged in the bombing.

"The bridge constantly needed maintenance," Distefano said. "Alpha company had been out there at least six times to do minor repairs with the tools we have. The decision was made to replace all the decking on the bridge with a little more sturdy material and lay asphalt over the top so it wouldn't come apart so much."

Construction started Nov. 15, and is scheduled for completion by the first week of December.

"The thing we want to impress upon the people of Baghdad is that the insurgents are making their lives harder, and this project is a visible sign that [multinational forces] are trying to help them, and help the country move in the right direction."